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AUTHOR Holowenzak, Stephen P.; Forgione, Pascal D.
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ABSTRACT

The Maryland Accountability Program (MAP), initiated in response to 1972 state legislation, has been planned and implemented to promote an understanding of the relationship among the quality of education, the characteristics of educational programs, the process of education and needed and available human and material resources, and, on the basis of that understanding, to make improvements in the Maryland educational system. Emphasis of MAP during the first two years has focused on the setting of goals and objectives at all three levels of public education--state, school system, and individual school--and on implementing a uniform assessment program. Future efforts will be made to explore the effects of educational process variables, such as program organization, methods of instruction, and student-peer-teacher interaction on achievement. Cooperative activities by state and local officials are also under way to introduce new financial reporting procedures. (Author/MLP)

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Maryland's Educational Accountability Program:

An Overview

Stephen P. Holowenzak
Consultant, Evaluation

Pascal D. Forgione
Administrator, Maryland
Accountability Program

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Maryland's Accountability Program: An Overview

Pascal D. Forgione*

Stephen P. Holowenzak*

Introduction

As part of this panel on the evaluation of educational accountability, I was asked to present an overview of the Maryland Accountability Program (MAP). In responding to this request, I shall direct my comments to three questions with regard to Maryland's Educational Accountability Program; namely, What is it? Where has it been? and Where is it going?

Historically, educational accountability may be characterized as coming in like a "lit fire cracker," with the legislative mandates of the Educational Accountability Act (1972) which called for the establishment of a Statewide educational accountability program. The Act contained five major components: 1) establishment of goals and objectives initially in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics; 2) school-by-school summary of current status of student achievement in relation to established objectives; 3) establishment of procedures for determining the effectiveness of school programs; 4) regular re-evaluation of program goals objectives; and 5) program cost information.

What the Maryland Accountability Program (MAP) is.¹

Program description. In Maryland, educational accountability is an attempt to disclose and explain the results achieved by public school programs. The MAP program may be characterized as:

1. Being a gradual and deliberate movement into an accountability program tailored to meet the needs of the Maryland educational system and the mandates of the Educational Accountability Act.

*Pascal D. Forgione is Administrator and Stephen P. Holowenzak is Consultant in Evaluation to the Maryland Accountability Program. A note of appreciation is extended to Dr. Richard K. McKay, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Research, Evaluation and Information Systems for his contribution to this paper.

¹A detailed description of the Maryland Accountability Program is contained in: Maryland Accountability Program Report II, School Year 1974-1975, Maryland State Department of Education: Baltimore, Md., January 1976. 606 pages. Especially chapters 1 and 2.

2. Being program-oriented.
3. Containing such educational accountability components as goal setting, assessment, analysis, and reporting.
4. Reflecting a demand for an accounting by all personnel.
5. Being positive in emphasis in that the accountability program is helping to identify exemplary educational programs.

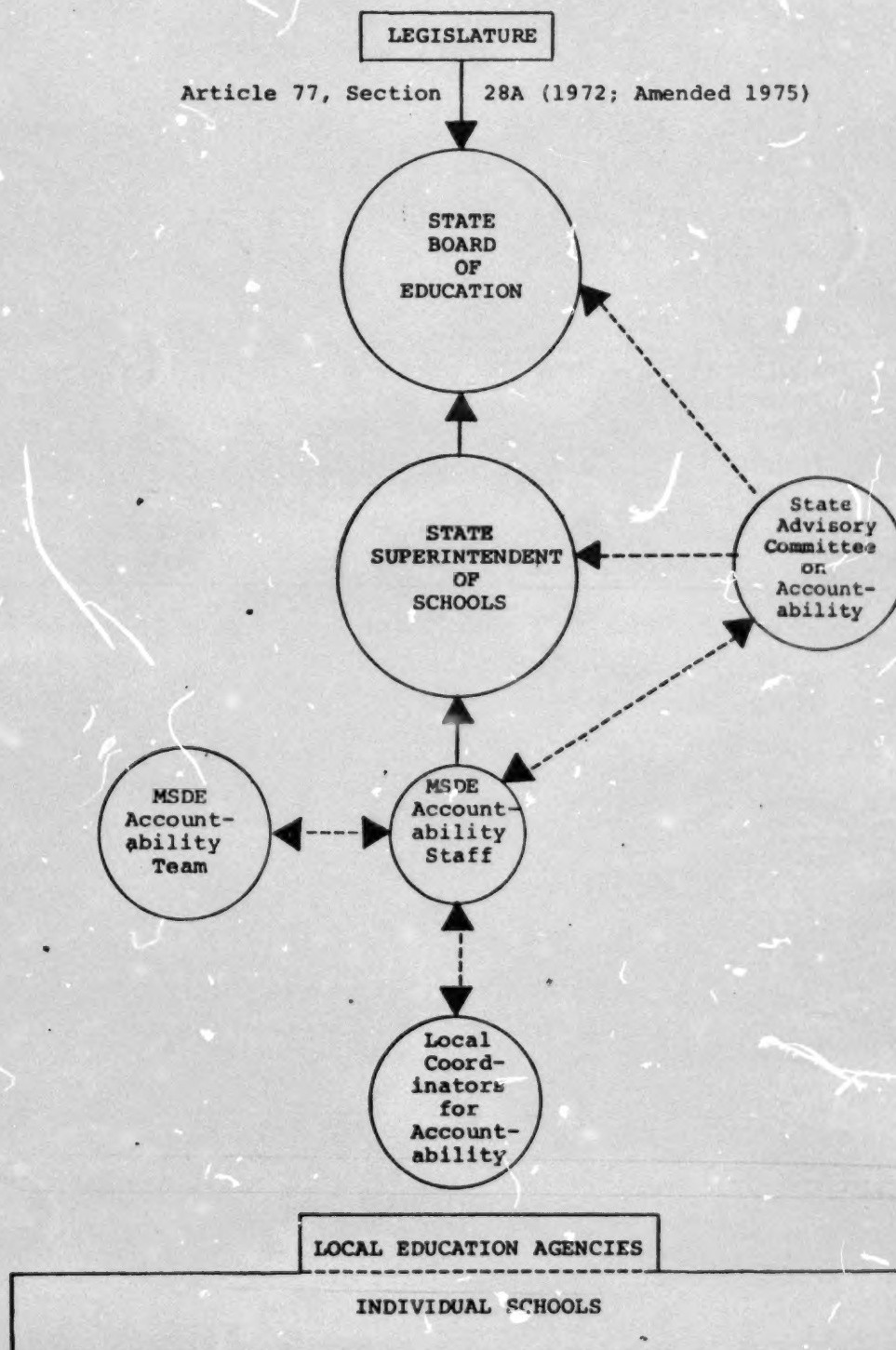
In essence, the Maryland Program has been planned and implemented to promote an understanding of the relationship among the quality of education, the characteristics of educational programs, the process of education and needed and available human and material resources, and, on the basis of that understanding, to make improvements in the Maryland educational system.

Maryland's Approach. Maryland's approach uses an evaluation model which takes into account input information (i.e., community, school, financial, and level of student ability characteristics); output information (i.e., grade equivalent scores (GE) by students in 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th grades on the eight subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Non-Verbal Battery of the Cognitive Abilities Test and on the percent achieving competency in Grades 7 and 11 on an objective-referenced functional reading test developed by the Maryland State Department of Education); and process information (i.e., those factors which intervene between inputs and outputs and which can range from curriculum goals and objectives to how teachers conduct their classes, or, from the principal's leadership style to the student's classroom behavior).

Administration of the Maryland Accountability Program. Since the enactment of the Educational Accountability Act in 1982, a unique decision-making process has emerged in the Maryland Accountability Program.

The decision-making process, which is illustrated in the accompanying figure, consists of primary accountability agents of the Maryland Accountability Program include:

Figure 1. Maryland Accountability Program Decisionmaking Process†



Mr. Richard Schifter, President, State Board of Education

Dr. James A. Sensenbaugh, State Superintendent of Schools

Richard K. McKay, Assistant State Superintendent for Research,
Evaluation and Information Systems (REIS)

Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Administrator, Maryland Accountability Program, REIS

State Advisory Committee on Accountability
Maryland State Department of Education Accountability Team
Local Coordinators for Accountability (one for each of the 24
Maryland school systems)

What has been accomplished?

1. Needs assessment of educational goals in Maryland has been completed.
2. Goals and objectives have been established at the State, local school system, and individual school levels over a two year period.
3. The Maryland Accountability Program assesses the three basic skills areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Two types of instruments are used: (1) the norm-referenced testing of the total school population in Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9; and (2) an objective-referenced instrument has been developed and implemented by the State to assess functional reading competencies at Grades 7 and 11.
4. An evaluation of the operations of the assessment component of the Maryland Accountability Program has been conducted.
5. Two summative reports have been published about the Maryland Accountability Program for School Years 1973-74 and 1974-75. These reports are the main instruments for the disclosure of goals in public education and progress towards those goals in Maryland.
6. A viable framework has been established that provides comparable statewide data. This impetus has stimulated local school systems to begin to analyze the assessment test results for informative purpose, that is, for improving educational programs at the system and school levels.

Maryland's Future in Accountability:

The major features of the five-year action plan for the Assessment Component, as approved by the Maryland State Board of Education (July, 1975), includes:

1. Continuing the use of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), Non-Verbal Battery, in Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 through Year III, 1975-76.
2. Requesting funds for Fiscal Year 1976 to begin the two-year development of Mastery Tests in Mathematics and Writing for Grade 11, with implementation projected for Year V, 1977-78.
 . (Initiation of the use of the Maryland Basic Skills Reading Mastery Test in Grades 7 and 11 in the fall of Year III, 1975-76.)
3. Expanding instrumentation to assess special education programs/services, beginning in Year III, 1975-76.
4. Beginning exploration for, or development of, assessment measures for selected aspects in the affective domain, such as student attitudes and interests, with implementation projected for Year IV, 1976-77.
5. Requesting in Fiscal Year 1977 and in Fiscal year 1978 budget funds for the development of additional or replacement assessment instruments for agreed-upon ITBS elements in Grades 3 and 7, with implementation projected for Year V, 1977-78.

In summary, emphasis of the MAP during the first two years has focused on the setting of goals and objectives at all three levels of public education--State, school system, and individual school--and on implementing a uniform assessment program. However, two equally important components of the MAP that have previously received less attention are the Process Evaluation and Program Cost Components.

During the 1974-75 school year, research proposals have been developed by State education agency (SEA) and local education agency (LEA) staff members, working together to explore the effects of educational process variables, such as program organization, methods of instruction, and student-peer-teacher interactions on achievement. The focus of this study will be to investigate the differential effectiveness of a pool of "outlier schools." These schools will be identified over the first three years utilizing a regression technique as schools that perform consistently above or below an

established expectancy level, that is, the top and the bottom 27 percent of Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 of Maryland public schools.

Similarly, cooperative activities by State and local officials are under way to introduce new financial reporting procedures. The proposed revisions will appear in the Maryland Financial Reporting Manual,² which will provide the mechanism for collecting comparable program cost information at the system level. The implementation of this comparable financial data system is viewed as a necessary first step in the development of a cost-effectiveness model for Maryland public school programs.

In brief, educational accountability in Maryland may be said to exist when the following conditions have been met:

1. The State goals of education reflect the educational needs and interests of the population.
2. Current student status, recent progress, and needed improvement in each goal area are matters of public record, and specific objectives for improving the current status have been adopted.
3. Programs to achieve specific objectives have been implemented.
4. The cost of programs, i.e., the cost of achieving goals and objectives, is a matter of public record.

²A detailed description of the financial reporting structure is found in Financial Reporting Manual . . . Maryland Public Schools, Maryland State Department of Education: Baltimore, Maryland. Revised 1976.